University of Reading

Appointment of
Head of School – Agriculture Policy and Development

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The University of Reading

Pioneers of people and sustainability

The University of Reading has been at the forefront of UK higher education for a century. Home to innovation, the University pushes academic boundaries and leads social change, both locally and internationally.

Our four guiding principles form the foundation of our strategy:

- a genuine love of learning
- creating new knowledge
- embracing and celebrating diversity of people and ideas
- and caring for our environment.

Steeped in history, the University of Reading is among the top 30 UK universities in the world* and is home to over 27,000 students from over 160 countries. Our award-winning green campuses are at the heart of our university community, providing world-class facilities alongside a sustainably conscious backdrop of nature. In 2026, our Whiteknights campus received its 16th Green Flag Award in a row, and we are considered one of Britain's top green spaces.

Our support for sustainable global development has been recognised by the Times Higher Education in their Impact Rankings 2025, with the University ranked in the top 50 universities worldwide and 6th in the UK.

We continue to be one of the most popular higher education choices in the UK. Our programmes range from the pure and applied sciences to languages, humanities, social sciences, business and arts. New research and the latest thinking continually feed into our teaching, with our academic staff working at the forefront of their fields of expertise.

*The University of Reading is ranked joint 27th in the UK, according to the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2026, (9 October 2025).

School of Agriculture, Policy and Development

The School of Agriculture, Policy and Development has expertise spanning agriculture, animal science, international development, environmental management, food marketing and consumer behaviour.

Founded in 1892, we've been contributing to teaching and research in agriculture and related fields for more than a century. Our research expertise is woven into our teaching, providing students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in their chosen career or further study.

In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), our research was internationally recognised, with 91% of our work in international development rated as internationally excellent, along with 80% of our work in agriculture and agri-food economics.

Each year we teach more than 800 students from around 80 countries, creating a truly international community of undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD students

Research

Research in the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development is driven by the key challenges we face in the world today, and aligns closely with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Research with impact

- We are the highest placed UK University for Agriculture and Forestry at 19th in the world (QS World Rankings by Subject, Agriculture and Forestry, 2026)
- 100% of our research in international development is of international standing (Research Excellence Framework 2021, combining 4*, 3* and 2* submissions in Anthropology and Development Studies).
- 95% of our research in agriculture and agri-food economics is of international standing (REF 2021, combining 4*, 3* and 2* submissions in Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Sciences).

Our academic departments

Research in the School is organised around five academic departments:

- Agri-Food Economics and Marketing: studying sustainable food system transformation – from production to consumer behaviour – to protect the environment and improve human health.
- Animal Sciences: increasing the sustainability of animal production and exploring the links between foods and consumer health.
- Crop Science: tackling issues such as sustainable intensification of crop production, breeding for climate resilience, and horticultural growing technologies and systems.
- International Development: enabling sustainable futures through research, partnership and training on the critical interfaces between agriculture, people and development.
- Sustainable Land Management: co-developing land management practices to simultaneously address agricultural and environmental challenges.

Interdisciplinary research

Our research sits at the heart of the University's new AgriFood Futures programme.
Our research staff play key roles in a variety of University-wide research themes, including:

- Agriculture, Food & Health
- Environment
- Prosperity and Resilience

We are strategic partners in EIT Food, a 50-member EU-funded knowledge innovation community (KIC) aiming to transform the way we produce, distribute and consume foods in Europe.

Research alliances

Researchers in the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development are collaborating with organisations such as EIT Food and The Planetary Health Alliance to affect positive change through research.

The role

Purpose

The Head of School is a key leadership role within the University, responsible for leading the strategic development and performance of the School. The postholder will provide academic and managerial leadership across all School activities, bringing colleagues together around a shared vision, driving innovation and ensuring excellence in education, research and external engagement.

As a member of the University's Senior Leadership Group, the Head of School will contribute to institutional decision-making, shape the future direction of the School and maximise its contribution to the University's strategic ambitions.

The Head of School is responsible and accountable through the PVC Academic Planning and Resource to the Council for the successful organisation and performance of the School.

Team Structure

The Head of School will form, shape and lead a senior leadership team that may include Heads of Department, Academic Leads/Managers and other Directors or Managers within the School, supporting them to manage their areas of responsibility effectively.

Working with the University Executive Board (UEB), fellow Heads of School, the Senior Leadership Group, the wider Leadership Forum and colleagues across the University, the Head of School will contribute to the leadership and strategic direction of the University, acting as a champion for transformational change, a role model for inclusivity and an active and constructive member of the university community.

Main duties and responsibilities:

The Head of School is expected to fulfil all the following:

1. Work closely with the School leadership team to prepare strategic plans, supported by appropriate business plans, for the School's future development including consultation on and delivery of Key Performance Indicators. This will include working closely with other Schools, Directorates and interdisciplinary initiatives across the University, and with Planning & Change Board when required;

2. Determine the appropriate leadership structure of the School and appoint members of the School's senior leadership team, including any heads of departments, and delegate to them day-to-day responsibilities as appropriate;

3. Oversee the appropriate allocation of workloads and academic contributions, ensuring that each member of the academic staff is properly classified and workload allocated accordingly;

4. Lead, inspire, mentor and motivate a leadership team that will support all School staff to deliver an effective student experience, fostering a positive and productive work environment, encouraging growth in individuals, recognising positive contributions and achievements with a commitment to embed the University's Values and Behaviours throughout the School.

5. Maintain and develop the School's relationships with key external stakeholders, maximising opportunities arising from strategic partnerships and enhancing the School's reputation, impact and influence nationally and internationally;

6. Lead academic workforce planning, recruitment and appointments, ensuring the School attracts, develops and retains outstanding talent;

7. Ensure annual personal development reviews are carried out for colleagues within the school to lead academic recognition processes, ensure appropriate objectives are set, career development plans are in place and that exceptional performance is rewarded appropriately;

8. Set up and maintain regular and effective communication with the leadership team and all staff within the School;

9. Have responsibility as budget holder for the effective financial management and oversight of resource decisions, ensuring financial sustainability and delivery against the School's 5 Year plan;

10. Provide overall support to leadership team members enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to the School's approach to student experience, ensuring appropriate responses to feedback from the student body;

Main duties and responsibilities (continued):

12. Ensure a safe working environment and positive safety culture through the effective leadership and management of health and safety, working closely with Health and Safety Services;

13. Maintain responsibility for business continuity and risk management of the School operations;

14. Represent the School effectively on relevant committees, working groups and panels;

15. Oversee and enable the School to make successful applications as appropriate for external accreditations including Charter Marks and Athena SWAN;

16. Contribute to the broader leadership within the University, attending meetings, committees and actively contributing to the Leadership Group, strategic projects and decisions as appropriate;

17. Take on such additional responsibilities as may be assigned by the Council or UEB from time to time.

Supervision received

Working collaboratively with the PVC (Academic Planning and Resource) to undertake strategic planning and prioritisation of teaching and learning, research and other activities within the School.

Supervision given

Accountable for the overall leadership and management of academic and professional services staff employed within the School. Line management of groups of staff may be delegated within members of the senior team set up by the Head of School.

Contact

- Members of University Executive Board and Council
- Members of University leadership, including Heads of School, Heads of Directorates and other leaders, managers and colleagues
- Representatives of employee, student or related networks and groups
- External Higher Education sector networks and other professional and/or statutory bodies
- External academic networks
- External stakeholders relevant to the School

Person specification

Skills and Attainment

- Ability to articulate and deliver a compelling strategic vision, demonstrating effective academic leadership and the ability to lead organisational change;
- Ability to communicate and engage others around School and University priorities in a clear, consistent and effective manner;
- Ability to develop, mentor and motivate staff through effective performance management, coaching and constructive feedback;
- Ability to foster high-performing cultures that encourage the innovation, collaboration and continuous improvement;
- Strong organisational and operational leadership skills, with the ability to manage complexity and deliver strategic priorities;
- Ability to work effectively with external stakeholders relevant to the School;
- Willingness to obtain or pursue management / leadership development training;
- Leadership and management development programmes or qualifications (desirable);
- Change management qualifications (desirable).

Knowledge and Relevant Experience

- Financially and commercially astute, with an understanding of resource allocation and financial sustainability within a university context;
- Understanding of developments in the Higher Education sector, and the relevant disciplinary context of the School's academic discipline(s);
- Experience of successful leadership within a university environment, including responsibility for people, resources and the delivery of strategic objectives;
- Established academic credibility and achievement in teaching and/or research;
- Experience of developing teams, managing performance and leading organisational or cultural change.

Other

- Demonstrates awareness and role-models the University Values and Behaviours;
- Inspire and motivate others;
- Honest, open and trustworthy;
- Ability to listen effectively, demonstrating individual understanding and empathy.

Terms of appointment

The post is full time, but consideration will be given to requests for part-time and job share arrangements in line with the University commitments to support flexibility in employment.

Whilst the academic appointment is to a permanent role, the Head of School role is offered for a fixed term period of six years in the first instance. At the end of the term, in the absence of any other arrangements, the post holder will take up their permanent academic appointment in their designated School.

This document outlines the duties required for the time being of the post to indicate the level of responsibility. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list and the line manager may vary duties from time to time which do not change the general character of the job or the level of responsibility entailed.

- **Location:** Reading
- **Salary:** Competitive
- **Pension:** USS (the Universities Superannuation Scheme) with employer contribution of 14.5%
- **Annual leave:** 26 days per year plus public holidays and additional days (normally 6 in total) when the University is closed around Easter and Christmas.

For further benefits details, please visit: https://www.reading.ac.uk/human-resources/working-life/employee-benefits

Information on relocation assistance can be found here: https://www.reading.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment/relocation-assistance

Due diligence
Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.

How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the University of Reading on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at roles.saxbam.com using code **IBVXG.**

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on **Friday 6th November.**

- The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice
According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

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